

British films of 60's

by Ron Norman

The cinema is no longer viable on a national level, either artistically or economically. Countries like Canada, while retaining their indigenous elements, must recognize the necessity of an international cinematic market. This statement was one of several made by film critic, historian, and author, Roger Manvell, Monday evening, March 8 in the Sir James Dunn Theatre.

What could have been a fascinating perhaps illuminating evening of film criticism and history was instead a hazy, somewhat nebulous discussion of the present state of British cinema, coupled with an extremely general history of British cinema in the sixties.

Manvell has many years of prestigious cinematic work credited to him: twelve years as director of the British Film Academy, and Consultant to the Society of Film and Television Arts; he was also head of the Department of Film History at the London Film School. His current position as guest lecturer at Boston University's School of Public Communications afforded him the opportunity to visit Dalhousie.

Though he did cast allusions that reinforced his knowledgeable background, Manvell made no particularly impressive statements about British film in the sixties (the lecture topic). He began the evening with a brief look at cinema in the seventies so that the difference with film in the sixties could be put in context.

He stated that the larger studios in Britain were now closing because of the increasing popularity and lower costs of films shot on location (as opposed to films made in the studio). The economics of motion pictures affects other areas as well, said Manvell; theatres in Britain, for instance, have dropped from 4500 to 1500. Similarly, because of the recession in the U.S. three years ago as well as rising

production costs British cinema can no longer afford to produce grandiose films. At the end of the sixties the British film industry was 90% financed by U.S. dollars.

Manvell also made some stray comments about television's relation to the movies (i.e. it took the "wonder" from the cinema), and he expressed his surprise at the North American's contempt for the "toob", saying that in Britain it was the major artistic medium. Manvell did make the pointed comment that movies, in order to be popular, have had to take a different road than television. Thus, one sees the outburst of spectacle films (which I hope I do not have to give examples of; they're the only ones we are exposed to in Halifax), and films containing things not seen (usually not permitted) on television.

Manvell went on to discuss the cinema as an international medium. Forced by television and rising costs, the cinema must now appeal to an international market. Even the U.S. can no longer survive on strictly a domestic market and must distribute to outside areas. Such pressure has also caused a flow of technicians, producers, directors, and even actors among countries of different languages (eg. Jane Fonda acting in films by Jean-Luc Godard (in French), and Francois Truffaut directing in English with Oskar Werner and Julie Christie). Manvell stated that Europe produced some 400 feature films last year, more than even the U.S.

Having sketchily defined the cinema in the seventies, Manvell finally reached his subject. He suggested that the change in the British society at the beginning of the sixties (ie. the class breakdown and the acceptance of the working class by the middle class) was first reflected in the theatre and then in film. One saw the appearance of movies such as *Room at the Top*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morn*

Kubrick's "Barry Lyndon"

by Dorothy Becker

The story of Barry Lyndon (based on a novel by Thackeray) is a moral tale of a mediocre man who manages, by means of an unspectacular wit and increasing deviousness, to elevate himself into a marriage with a member of the English aristocracy. This achieved, he almost immediately begins his descent, through squander, bribery, adultery and violence, into obscurity and broken-hearted poverty. Ryan O'Neil portrays Lyndon as emotionally flat and as apparently devoid of active intelligence -- the perfect anti-hero. I kept wishing that someone else (Alan Bates?) had been chosen for this part. I felt that O'Neil was far too much of a puppet, able to weep or smile on command, but unable to convey even the slightest hint of the character's underlying motivations or conflicts. Marisa Berensen, as Lady Lyndon, gives a similar kind of performance, but her china-like beauty masks an emotional fragility

which is more suited to the characterization of a delicate and aristocratic lady. In contrast, minor characters in the film are lively, extremely three dimensional personalities who provide humour, colour, and vivacity to the story.

As in his earlier film, 2001, Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* takes the viewer on a compelling journey through time and space -- except that in this film we are transported back two hundred years in time to eighteenth century England. The film is a marvellous

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"Cha cha cha" or something like that. Dal Photo / Walsh
Roger Manvell in the Sir James Dunn Theatre.

ing, *Darling*, and *Billy Liar*. Manvell then presented four film extracts from the sixties and discussed them very, very briefly: *The Caretaker* (1960), *Dr. Strangelove* (1962), *A Taste of Honey*, and *Morgan* (late sixties). The lecture was long enough (2 hours) yet it lacked in-depth discussion of the British films sixties.

visual experience of happenings in an era which seems to have entirely different dimensions of time and space. The vacuous tedium and impotence of aristocratic life is epitomized by the scenario of Lady Lyndon sitting in her bath, staring into space as her maid reads to her in a French. Time is portrayed powerfully as something to be endured as the bringer of inevitable fate. Similarly, the concept of space in the film is expanded until it, too, seems limitless and unbreachable. There is also an "open-air" *Cont'd on pg. 18*

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